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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PINR](#) [KCRM](#) [LE](#) [SY](#) [UN](#)
SUBJECT: MGLE01: UNIIIC SAYS USG ASSISTANCE IS
"FANTASTIC," PLANS MEETINGS IN WASHINGTON

Classified By: Ambassador Jeffrey D. Feltman for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)
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11. (U) This message contains an action request for the
Department -- please see paras 9-10.

SUMMARY

12. (S) In a May 12 meeting with emboffs, senior investigators from the UN International Independent Investigation Commission (UNIIIC) said that the USG's responsiveness on the UNIIIC's RFAs is "fantastic" and that they are looking forward to meeting USG officials to follow up on these requests in Washington in early June. UNIIIC acting chief of investigations Peter Nicholson also provided emboffs with additional information regarding the DNA of suspected Hariri bomber Ahmad Abu Adass and the remains of a "John Doe" found at the blast site. Nicholson said that the UNIIIC's investigation is now going into "high gear." They have brought in a Spanish investigative team to perform a complete excavation of the February 14, 2005, blast site, and have also hired a senior Belgian investigator, Bernard Mitchelson, to pursue the investigation into the 14 other bombings that have occurred since October 2004. Nicholson requested another look into the USG's overhead imagery of Beirut, Anjar, and the Zabadani base in Syria. He and UNIIIC senior investigator Rosemary Nidiry also discussed with emboffs plans to follow up on FBI offers to visit the Quantico forensic labs and DOJ's offer to discuss witness protection programs. End summary.

UNIIIC THANKS USG FOR ASSISTANCE;
PLANS WASHINGTON TRIP IN JUNE

13. (S) UNIIIC investigators Peter Nicholson and Rosemary Nidiry met with emboffs and legatt at the Embassy on the afternoon of May 12. During the hour-long meeting, emboffs briefed Nicholson and Nidiry on initial USG responses to the UNIIIC's requests for assistance (RFAs). Assistance efforts included FBI offers to set up meetings in Washington between UNIIIC officials and the FBI's DNA labs to discuss the suicide bomber database and run mitochondrial analysis on the UNIIIC's "John Doe," as well as meetings with the FBI's communications and behavioral analysis units, and a visit to their Quantico labs. Emboff also informed the UNIIIC investigators about the Justice Department's offer of advice on setting up witness protection plans.

¶4. (S) Nicholson said that this offer of USG assistance was "fantastic." He said that he and Nidiry would discuss the details of a trip to Washington in the coming days, but Nicholson thought that he would be the one most likely to travel to Washington for the meetings with the FBI and DOJ. In addition to technical discussions with the DOJ to discuss how to set up a witness protection program, Nicholson also requested meetings with an appropriate USG agency, presumably DHS, to discuss asylum and parole options for certain UNIIIC witnesses as a sort of "witness protection lite." (COMMENT: In a follow-up conversation with emboff, Nicholson confirmed that he would travel to Washington to meet with the FBI and DOJ. He would need an extra few days to finish drafting the UNIIIC's next report to the Security Council, the due date for which has been moved up from June 15 to June 9. Nicholson anticipated that he would be available for Washington meetings June 10-13. End comment.)

DNA ANALYSIS

¶5. (S) In the meantime, Nicholson provided emboffs with DNA profiles of suspected Hariri bomber Ahmad Abu Adass and Adass's family members, as well as DNA analysis of an unidentified "John Doe" found at the February 14 blast site. Legatt has sent these profiles back to FBI headquarters for further analysis.

EXCAVATING THE BLAST SITE

¶6. (S) Nicholson said that the UNIIIC's investigation is going into "high gear." He pointed to their recent efforts

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to fully excavate the February 14, 2005, blast site. This is because a "proper and complete" excavation of the crater has never taken place. Now, the UNIIIC has brought in the same Spanish forensic team that investigated the May 2004 Madrid bombings to examine the Hariri assassination site in downtown Beirut. The Spanish team is one of the world's best, and will be working in shifts during 18-hour days to completely excavate the crater and surrounding area, Nicholson said.

¶7. (S) The entire effort, Nicholson said, would take about a month, lasting until mid-June. In the meantime, the Lebanese authorities have built a huge tent covering nearly the entire city block where the bombing took place, and have visibly increased the security perimeter around the blast site with new fences, lines of police tape, and as many as 500 LAF soldiers to provide perimeter security. Under this heavy protection, the Spanish team will dig down into the blast crater. Depending on how far down they can find pieces of the chassis of the suspected bomb platform, the white Mitsubishi cantervan, and at what depth bedrock lies, they will be able to conclusively determine whether the large explosion came from the van or an underground explosive device. In any event, Nicholson expected the team to find a great deal of physical evidence -- some 15 months after the event.

14 MORE CASES "HEATING UP"

¶8. (S) At the same time, Nicholson said that UNIIIC Commissioner Serge Brammertz has hired another well-known Belgian investigator, Bernard Mitchelson, to open formal investigations into 14 other bombings that have taken place since October 2004. Nicholson said Mitchelson is building a large investigative team of his own as well. Nicholson said the investigations into these 14 other bombings were really "heating up" and he asked that Mitchelson have a chance to meet Embassy Legatt in the coming weeks to discuss additional opportunities for assistance in these other investigations. Legatt said he would be ready to meet with Mitchelson at any

time.

MORE OVERHEAD RECONNAISSANCE REQUESTS

¶9. (S) Action request: Nicholson also said he is still interested in seeing overhead imagery of Beirut, Anjar, and the Zabadani base in Syria. He said that a previous UNIIIC RFA may not have come across clearly, with the wording making it seem that the UNIIIC was interested solely in any sign of a white Mitsubishi van in the imagery. Rather, the UNIIIC is interested more broadly in Syrian patterns of activity in Beirut, Anjar and Zabadani, and would like to see if the USG has any more overhead surveillance that could be made available for this purpose.

¶10. (S) Action request, continued: Nicholson said that, ideally, he would like to see as many as 12 overhead shots of Beirut from January 1 to February 20, 2005. He also said he would like to see any available satellite imagery taken over Anjar and Zabadani between July 1, 2004 and December 31, ¶2005. He realized the difficulty of these requests, given the classification levels of satellite imagery, but he would be happy with anything the USG could provide. Regardless of the date of the imagery -- the USG could even "pick a date" -- it could be of use to the UNIIIC, regardless of whether any sign of a white Mitsubishi van turned up. Specifically, the imagery could help the UNIIIC corroborate certain witness accounts. Particularly in the case of Anjar, the UNIIIC was interested in signs of "vehicles stored for operations," Nicholson said.
FELTMAN